

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6712

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

US MISSION USUN 5313

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 11623

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, UR, US, EG, XF, LY, LE, SY, JO, YC

SUBJECT: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL DISCUSSES LEBANESE SITUATION AND
OTHER MIDDLE EAST ISSUES

1. SUMMARY. JULY 21 CALL BY POL COUNSELOR ON Y.D. PYRLIN,
DEPUTY CHIEF, NEAR EAST COUNTRIES DIVISION, MFA, SHED SOME
ADDITIONAL LIGHT ON SOVIET VIEW OF CURRENT MIDDLE EAST SITUATION,
PARTICULARLY VIS-A-VIS LEBANON. PYRLIN EMPHASIZED THAT MOST
IMPORTANT TASK WAS TO STOP THE FIGHTING AND SAID THE SOVIETS HAVE
SENT A STREAM OF MESSAGES TO ALL THE PARTIES URGING A CEASE-FIRE.
HE SAW SOVIET ROLE AS ASSISTING IN BRINGING ALL LEBANESE FACTIONS
(INCLUDING PALESTINIANS WHO ARE PART OF LEBANESE INTERNAL POLITICS,
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BUT NOT SYRIANS WHO ARE NOT) TO ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION. RETURN

TO PRE-CONFLICT POLITICAL SITUATION IN LEBANON WAS IMPOSSIBLE, ACCORDING TO PYRLIN. SOME CHANGE IN CONFESSIONAL SYSTEM, BASED ON CENSUS TAKEN FORTY YEARS AGO, WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE TO REFLECT "INTERNAL REALITY" IN COUNTRY, HE SAID. PYRLIN WAS SKEPTICAL REGARDING EGYPT'S CURRENT "RATHER POSITIVE" ROLE IN LEBANESE CRISIS AND SHARP ABOUT EGYPTIAN EXPLOITATION OF SUDANESE CHARGES OVER COUP ATTEMPT. HE WAS ALSO HIGHLY CRITICAL OF DAMASCUS AND INSISTED THAT SYRIANS MUST WITHDRAW FROM LEBANON. KHADDAM VISIT HE CHARACTERIZED AS UNSUCCESSFUL AND SAID THAT KHADDAM AND SOVIETS WERE SAYING THE SAME WORDS BUT WERE TALKING DIFFERENT LANGUAGES. SOVIET EMBASSY STAFF IN BEIRUT IS ABOUT TO BE CUT FROM FORTY TO FIFTEEN.

2. ON SYRIA, PYRLIN SAID THAT DESPITE DIFFICULTIES REGARDING LEBANON, ALL AGREEMENTS, INCLUDING SOVIET-SYRIAN ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP, WERE CONTINUING NORMALLY. PYRLIN SAW NO PROSPECTS FOR GENEVA TALKS NOT ONLY UNTIL AFTER U.S. ELECTIONS, BUT ALSO UNTIL LEBANON PROBLEM IS SETTLED AND SOME DEGREE OF COMMON PURPOSE IS FELT BY ALL PALESTINIAN FACTIONS. HE ALSO SAID THAT U.S. PROPOSAL FOR PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE WAS RULED OUT UNTIL LEBANON CRISIS HAS PASSED. ONLY POSSIBILITY, HE MUSED, WAS DIRECT U.S.-SOVIET TALKS WHICH SOVIET SAID HAS REPEATEDLY PROPOSED TO NO EFFECT.

3. THERE HAD BEEN SOME TALK OF AN ARAFAT VISIT TO MOSCOW WHICH MIGHT BE USEFUL, BUT ARAFAT COULD NOT LEAVE MIDDLE EAST WHILE LEBANESE SITUATION WAS IN SUCH FLUX, PYRLIN SAID. ALL IN ALL, PYRLIN WAS UNUSUALLY GLUM OVER PALESTINIAN INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND DIFFICULTIES AND REFERRED SEVERAL TIMES TO 1970 JORDANIAN EVENTS. END SUMMARY.

4. PYRLIN REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT MOST IMPORTANT TASK WAS TO STOP FIGHTING IN LEBANON. CABLES WENT EVERY DAY TO SOVIET EMBASSIES IN REGION DIRECTING SOVIET DIPLOMATS TO APPROACH ALL PARTIES IN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE CEASE-FIRE. ONE CEASE-FIRE COULD BE ACHIEVED, SOVIET GOAL IS TO BRING ALL FORCES IN LEBANON TO ROUNDTABLE FOR NEGOTIATIONS, PYRLIN SAID. PALESTINIANS MUST BE INCLUDED IN SUCH DISCUSSIONS SINCE THEY ARE AN INTERNAL LEBANESE POLITICAL FACTOR, HE SAID, BUT SYRIANS SHOULD NOT BE, SINCE THERE SHOULD BE NO INTERFERENCE BY OUTSIDE FORCES. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE COULD BE NO RETURN TO PRE-CONFLICT SITUATION IN LEBANON, AND CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT CONFESSIONAL SYSTEM WOULD HAVE TO BE CHANGED TO REFLECT "INTERNAL REALITY" IN COUNTRY, WHICH HAD SEEN GREAT POPULATION SHIFTS SINCE 40-YEAR-OLD CENSUS ON WHICH CONFESSIONAL SYSTEM WAS BUILT.

5. PYRLIN SAID SOVIETS STRONGLY BELIEVE SYRIANS SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM LEBANON, BUT ADDED THAT THIS COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED "PERHAPS WITH SOME CONDITIONS." WHILE HE DID NOT SPELL THESE OUT, HE

INDICATED THAT SYRIANS WOULD LIKELY PRESS FOR A PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL OR PERHAPS FOR A "CORDON SANITAIRES" ALONG THE SYRIAN BORDER. PYRLIN ALSO ALLUDED TO RUMORS PICKED UP BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN BEIRUT FROM PALESTINIAN SOURCES OF A PLAN (UNSPECIFIED AUTHOR) TO PARTITION LEBANON INTO FOUR STATES: TWO SEPARATE PALESTINIAN ENCLAVES, ONE IN THE SOUTH, ONE IN THE NORTH-WEST; AND A CHRISTIAN AND A MOSLEM PORTION.

6. PYRLIN SAID KHADDAM VISIT HAD BEEN AT SYRIAN INITIATIVE (PERHAPS AT SUGGESTION OF KING HUSAYN) AND THAT SOVIETS HAD NOT BEEN SATISFIED WITH KHADDAM'S EXPLANATION OF SYRIAN GOALS FOR ITS "DEEP INVOLVEMENT." DURING THE TALKS, PYRLIN SAID, EVERYONE AGREED ON NEED TO BRING PEACE TO LEBANON, BUT KHADDAM AND SOVIETS SPOKE ON DIFFERENT LEVELS AND, WHILE USING SAME WORDS, SPOKE IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES SO THERE WAS NO MEETING OF THE MINDS.

7. PYRLIN SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHY SYRIANS HAD FELT IT NECESSARY TO INTERVENE, BUT THERE ARE FOUR EXTANT THEORIES, EACH OF THEM A POSSIBILITY: A) TO ACHIEVE A "GREATER SYRIA," B) TO STRENGTHEN THE PRO-SYRIAN BRANCH OF PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT, C) TO MANIPULATE PALESTINIANS FOR SYRIAN PURPOSES, OR D) TO DESTROY PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT ALTOGETHER. DESPITE STRONG DIFFERENCES REGARDING LEBANON, THERE HAS BEEN NO "SPECTACULAR" CHANGE IN SOVIET-SYRIAN RELATIONS, SAID PYRLIN. ASKED ABOUT THE SOVIET SUPPLY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO SYRIA, PYRLIN REPLIED, "AS FAR AS I KNOW, ALL MILITARY AGREEMENTS ARE BEING FULFILLED." PYRLIN SAID HE HAD NOT YET SEEN TEXT OF JULY 21 ASAD SPEECH BUT THAT HE HAD HEARD FROM YUGOSLAV MINISTER-COUNSELOR THAT ASAD HAD BEEN VERY SEVERE ON PALESTINIANS.

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8. PYRLIN SOMEWHAT RELUCTANTLY ADMITTED THAT EGYPTIANS WERE NOW PLAYING A "RATHER POSITIVE ROLE" IN LEBANON, BUT WENT ON TO SAY HE THOUGHT THIS WAS A TACTICAL EFFORT TO ENABLE EGYPT TO CONFUST SITUATION AND WEAKEN PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. HE WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF SADAT'S EXPLOITATION OF NUMAYRI'S ANTI-SOVIET CHARGES OVER SUDANESE COUP ATTEMPT AND SAID HE HAD EXPRESSED ANNOYANCE TO EGYPTAIN EMBASSY HERE.

9. HE ADMITTED LIBYAN INVOLVEMENT IN SUDAN--"NOT MUCH DOUBT THAT LIBYA PRACTICALLY WAS INVOLVED"--BUT SAID THIS INVOLVEMENT WAS NOT AS REGIME, BUT AS EFFORT OF SOME OFFICIALS AND ARMY OFFICERS. PYRLIN

SPECULATED THAT QADHAFI DID NOT KNOW ALL DETAILS OF LIBYAN
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INVOLVEMENT, BUT HE SAID THAT IT MAY HAVE BEEN THAT QADHAFI WANTED AN ANTI-EGYPTIAN REGIME IN SUDAN.

10. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT SOVIET CONTROLS ON WEAPONS SUPPLIED TO OTHER COUNTRIES, PYRLIN SAID BILATERAL AGREEMENTS FORBADE SUCH TRANSFER WITHOUT SOVIET APPROVAL. FOR THIS REASON, HE SAID, THE INDIANS WERE NOT ABLE TO SUPPLY THE EGYPTIANS WITH SPARE PARTS FOR SOVIET-SUPPLIED AIRCRAFT. WHEN PRESSED, HE DENIED THAT LIBYA WAS "SUCH A BIG SUPPLIER" OF WEAPONS TO THIRD COUNTRIES AND TERRORIST GROUPS, AND DESCRIBED SADAT'S \$12 BILLION FIGURE FOR SOVIET WEAPONRY SOLD TO LIBYA AS "UTTERLY FANTASTIC."

11. PYRLIN EXPRESSED GREAT UNHAPPINESS OVER PLIGHT OF PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT, REPEATEDLY ALLUDING TO JORDANIAN 1970 SUPPRESSION OF PALESTINIANS. HE NOTED IN THIS REGARD WESTERN PRESS REPORTS WHICH DESCRIBED CURRENT SITUATION AS "JORDANIZATION OF LEBANON." THERE WAS DANGER, HE SAID, OF LIQUIDATION OF PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT AS RESULT OF PRESENT CRISIS. EQUALLY IMPORTANT, PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT WAS SUFFERING FROM VERY GRAVE INTERNAL DIVISIONS

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ARAFAT, WHO MET JULY 20 WITH SOVIET DIPLOMATS IN TRIPOLI, IS IN VERY DIFFICULT POSITION, SAID PYRLIN. THE WHOLE SITUATION PROVES ONCE AGAIN THAT PLO IS A "VERY MULTICOLORED ORGANIZATION." ARAFAT VISIT TO MOSCOW HAD BEEN TALKED ABOUT AND MIGHT BE USEFUL, PYRLIN SAID, BUT HE VANNOT LEAVE MIDDLE EAST GIVEN COMPLEXITIES OF PRESENT SITUATION. PYRLIN STATED THAT PALESTINIANS WERE GETTING MOST OF THEIR ARMS FROM LIBYA AND IRAQ, AND SAID SUPPLY SITUATION WAS BECOMING VERY DIFFICULT AND COMPLICATED. EVEN SOVIET UNION CANNOT FIND A WAY TO GET RED CROSS HELP TO PALESTINIANS, HE SAID. PYRLIN SPOKE HIGHLY OF THE NEW PLO REPRESENTATIVE IN MOSCOW, SHA'IR--WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS A POET AND NOVELIST. WHEN ASKED, PYRLIN DENIED FLATLY THAT SHA'IR WAS AN ARAFAT MAN.

12. PYRLIN SAID HE SAW NO PROSPECT FOR REVIVAL OF THE GENEVA TALKS UNTIL AFTER U.S. ELECTION. WHEN QUESTIONED FURTHER, HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT GENEVA HAD MOVED FARTHER INTO THE BACKGROUND AS A RESULT OF THE LEBANESE SITUATION AND THE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. THERE WAS NO REAL PROSPECT, HE SAID, OF CONVENING GENEVA UNTIL THE PALESTINIANS GET THEIR HOUSE IN ORDER AND THIS WILL NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL THE CRISIS IS RESOLVED IN LEBANON. PRELIMINARY TALKS AS PROPOSED BY THE U.S. WITHOUT PLO
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WERE ALSO NOT POSSIBLE, HE SAID. ONLY POSSIBILITY HE COULD ENVISAGE WAS FOR U.S.-SOVIET BILATERAL TALKS. SOVIET SIDE HAD REPEATEDLY PROPOSED SUCH TALKS WITHOUT ANY EFFECT, HE ASSERTED. HE MENTIONED THAT SUCH TALKS HAD TAKEN PLACE IN 1969 WITH MR. SISCO REPRESENTING THE U.S. SIDE, BUT HE ADMITTED THAT THEY HAD PRODUCED NO PRACTICAL RESULTS. PYRLIN DENIED THAT ANY SOVIET-ISRAELI CONTACTS HAD TAKEN PLACE RECENTLY AND SAID THAT WHILE SOVIET-ISRAELI CONTACTS MIGHT EVENTUALLY BE USEFUL, THIS WAS NOT TIME FOR THEM.

15. PYRLIN ASKED ABOUT REDUCTION OF U.S. EMBASSY BEIRUT STAFF AND SAID SOVIET EMBASSY THERE WAS BEING CUT ON JULY 22 FROM 40 TO ABOUT 15. HE NOTED THAT THEY WERE FORTUNATE THAT THEIR EMBASSY HAS AN INDEPENDENT WATER SUPPLY INSIDE THE COMPOUND.

16. PYRLIN SAW NO SOVIET-ME VISITS ON HORIZON. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS TIME, HE SAID, FOR PODGORNYY TO VISIT JORDAN IN RETURN FOR THE KING'S VISIT. AN INVITATION "IN PRINCIPLE" HAD BEEN EXTENDED TO YAR LEADER IN MARCH, BUT NO DATE HAD BEEN SET, AND VISIT DOES NOT SEEM IMMINENT. PYRLIN HIMSELF LEAVES ON VACATION (KISLOVODSK) JULY 29. HE RETURN SEPTEMBER 2.

17. COMMENT. WHILE PYRLIN TRIED TO GIVE AIR OF BUSY SOVIET INVOLVEMENT WITH EMISSARIES CALLING ON ALL SIDES IN CONFLICT IN ATTEMPT TO BEING ABOUT CEASE-FIRE, HE CLEARLY FELT THAT SITUATION WAS OUT OF SOVIET (AND PERHAPS ANYBODY'S) CONTROL. HE USED WORDS "DIFFICULT" AND "COMPLICATED" IN ALMOST EVERY

SPECIFIC SITUATION HE DISCUSSED. HIS NEAR DESPAIR AT PLIGHT OF
PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT WAS EVIDENT, BUT, OTHER THAN ADMITTING
SERIOUS SOVIET DIFFERENCES WITH SYRIANS OVER THE INTERVENTION,
HE DID NOT INDICATE MANNER IN WHICH SOVIET UNION WAS TRYING
TO PRESSURE SYRIA INTO WITHDRAWING. HIS SPECULATION OVER POSSIBILITY
OF U.S.-SOVIET CLOSED TALKS ON ME/LEBANON SEEMED TO BE MORE
THINKING OUT LOUD THAN A CAREFULLY CONVEIVED PROPOSAL.
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